

IURC News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission Approves Winter Warmth Settlement

Today, in Cause No. 42927, the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC, the Commission) approved a settlement agreement between NIPSCO and LaPorte County, which will extend and enhance the utility's pilot low income energy assistance program through December 2006. The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor was not a party to the settlement, but did not oppose it.

The program as approved:

- increases the maximum benefit per participant per heating season;
- reduces the customer deposit requirements for eligible customers;
- places program participants on a 12-month budget billing plan;
- allocates up to \$750,000 for weatherization;
- requires data collection for future program evaluation.

Evidence submitted by NIPSCO shows that in the first year of the Winter Warmth pilot program 14,717 families were assisted and more than \$5-million was applied to accounts for utility assistance or for assistance with deposits.

The order provides that the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) lead a collaborative process between the utilities and stakeholders this summer, with the intent to identify best practices so a uniform state-wide low-income heating assistance program can be instituted for the heating season which begins November 1, 2006.

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